

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

1. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Kevin Goodman on 10/21/09.

The application has been amended as follows:

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. - 3. (Canceled)

4. (Currently Amended) A coin collecting device for a vending machine comprising:

a collecting device body that includes a coin path having a coin holding portion where a required number of coins for purchasing an article are held in a row;

a coin-insertion completion determining means that determines whether or not the required number of coins have been inserted into the coin holding portion; and

a coin collecting mechanism that operates in concert with a dispensing operation of an article to move the coins from the coin holding portion into a coin box,

the coin holding portion being constructed so that the coins held in a row therein are electrically connected to each other in series,

the coin-insertion completion determining means including a first electrode that is in contact with the coin located at one end of the row and a second electrode that is in contact with the coin located at the other end of the row, and being constructed to detect that the insertion of the required number of coins has been completed by detecting an electric current flowing between the first and second electrodes,

the coin holding portion being constructed in such a manner that the one end of the row is positioned lower than the other end of the row, and that the required number of coins are all held erect and side by side from the one end toward the other end,

the coin holding portion including two plate members spaced apart in a thickness direction and an opposing surface opposing a bottom opening of a space formed between the two plate members, and is constructed so that the coins are held between the two plate members with outer peripheral portions thereof being in contact with the opposing surface, both upper end portions of the two plate members being disposed to be able to swing via a hinge mechanism such that the first electrode swings with the two plate members, and

the coin collecting mechanism being constructed so that, when the two plate members are swung to one side, the coins of the row get out of contact with the opposing surface to drop down from between the two plate members into a coin box.

5. (Original) The coin collecting device for a vending machine according to claim 4, wherein the first and second electrodes are constructed in such a manner that an installation position of at least one of the first and second electrodes is movable.

6. - 7. (Canceled)

8. (Previously Presented) The coin collecting device for a vending machine according to claim 4, wherein the first electrode is constructed to be in contact with an upper peripheral portion of the coin located at the one end of the row held in the coin holding portion; and

the second electrode is constructed to be in contact with a lower peripheral portion of the coin located at the other end of the row held in the coin holding portion.

9. (Canceled)

10. (Previously Presented) The coin collecting device for a vending machine according to claim 4, wherein the second electrode is disposed on the opposing surface; and

the first electrode is constructed as a pin-shaped electrode piercing through the two plate members.

11. (Original) The coin collecting device for a vending machine according to claim 10, wherein the installation position of the first electrode is constructed to be movable;

an electrode holding structure includes an electrode holder that holds the pin-shaped electrode, and is constructed so that, when the two plate members swing toward the coin collecting side where the coins are collected, the electrode holder also swings along with the two plate members; and

the pin-shaped electrode constitutes a means for determining the number of the coins entering between the two plate members.

12. (Original) The coin collecting device for a vending machine according to claim 11, wherein a base body provided with the opposing surface is formed with a slide groove disposed below, and extending parallel to, the opposing surface;

a part of the electrode holding structure is slidably fitted in the slide groove; a plurality of positioning grooves or recesses are formed at intervals along the slide groove between the slide groove and the opposing surface; and

the electrode holding structure is provided with a positioning portion to be fitted in the positioning grooves or recesses.

2. These comments are made in addition to the remarks in Applicant's specification and arguments, concerning the manner in which the invention distinguishes from the art discussed therein. The Examiner notes that the prior art does not disclose or suggest

the claimed combination including particularly coin collecting device for a vending machine having two swinging plates with first and second electrodes that are in contact with a row of coins, one electrode in contact with one end and the second electrode in contact with the opposite end of the row, with the first electrode swinging with the first electrode swinging with the two plate members. The closest prior art, Kamei (US 3,240,215), does not have such a first electrode that swings with the two plate members. Instead, all electrodes are stationary with the plates having holes through which the electrodes are placed. Thus, when the plates swing, the electrodes of Kamei remain stationary and do not move with the plates. See Kamei, col. 2, line 55-col. 3, line 10 and col. 3, lines 52-60 as well as figures 1 and 2. The prior art lacks this structure or anything equivalent to it.

The foregoing is an Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

3. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to JEFFREY A. SHAPIRO whose telephone number is (571)272-6943. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday, 9:00 AM-5:00 PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Patrick H. Mackey can be reached on (571)272-6916. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Jeffrey A. Shapiro/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 3653

October 21, 2009